

REMARKS

Claims 1-16 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, Applicants amend claims 1, 7, 9, and 15 for clarity. Support for the amendments may be found at least in FIGS. 6-9, 16, and 17. No new matter is added. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and prompt allowance of the pending claims at least in light of the following remarks.

Applicants appreciate the courtesies shown to Applicants' representative by Examiners Ha and Evanisko in the February 21 personal interview. Applicants incorporate a separate record of the substance of the interview into the following remarks.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Office Action's indication that claims 6 and 8 are allowed. However, as discussed during the personal interview, Applicants respectfully submit that all of claims 1-16 are allowable for at least the following reasons.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-5, 7, and 9-16 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 6,227,732 (Higuchi). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

In particular, as discussed during the personal interview, Higuchi fails to disclose "wherein the first portion and the third portion are only connected by the second portion that faces only the side face of the stack of sheets," as recited in claims 1, 7, 9, and 15. Importantly, the package 51A, 51B of Higuchi has both portions 51c and 51d connecting the portions 51b and 53. Thus, the portions 51b and 53 of Higuchi are not "only connected by the second portion that faces only the side face of the stack of sheets," as recited in claims 1, 7, 9, and 15.

Accordingly, claims 1, 7, 9, and 15 are patentable over Higuchi. Further, claims 2-5 and 10-14 are patentable for at least the reasons that claims 1 and 9 are patentable, as well as for the additional features they recite.


With respect to claim 16, as discussed during the personal interview, Higuchi fails to disclose "a sheet feed roller provided to the bottom of the sheet storage unit for feeding the

stacked sheets one by one." Rather, in Higuchi, the sheets are fed by sheet feed roller 4, which is clearly located above the sheets 1 and the sheet tray 2 (FIGS. 25 and 27 and C8/L45-58). Thus, the sheet feed roller 4 of Higuchi is not "provided to the bottom of the sheet storage unit for feeding the stacked sheets one by one," as recited in claim 16. Accordingly, claim 16 is patentable over Higuchi.

In view of at least the foregoing, claims 1-5, 7, and 9-16 are patentable over Higuchi. Applicants thus respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. Applicants earnestly solicit favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the pending claims.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, Applicants invite the Examiner to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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